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Danger—chemicals at work

The Health & Safety Commission is seeking a statutory labelling scheme for dangerous chemicals.

Some 800 dangerous chemicals commonly used in industry, about a dozen of which are also used in the home, are covered by a statutory labelling scheme put forward by the Health and Safety Commission. The proposed labels — which would cover such dangerous chemicals as strychnine, sodium cyanide and benzene — include easily-understood pictorial warnings of the hazard presented by the chemicals. This would be a great advance in safety, as it would for the first time make it a legal obligation for many of these dangerous chemicals to carry a warning of the danger they present.

The proposals have been sent for comment to the TUC and the CBI, consumer organisations, and trade associations. After the consultative period is over — by the end of August — the Commission will ask the Secretaries of State for Employment and for Prices & Consumer Protection to introduce legislation by July 1977 which would require suppliers to attach warning labels to containers of all these chemicals. The most dangerous chemicals are classified either as explosive, highly flammable, toxic or corrosive. Others, while still dangerous, present a lesser hazard and are classified as oxidising, flammable, irritant or harmful.

The main feature of the label is a danger symbol accompanied by a key word. Each symbol shows the likely dangers and will be printed in black on a bright orange/yellow background so that it stands out prominently. Each danger category has its own symbol: an exploding bomb for explosive substances; a flame over a circle for oxidising substances; a flame for highly flammable substances; a skull and cross bones for toxic substances; a picture of a hand and a piece of metal being dissolved for corrosive substances; and a St. Andrews Cross for harmful or irritant substances.

The label will also carry:

- one or more risk phrases spelling out in more detail the main dangers eg "causes severe burns" or "reacts very violently with water"
- one or more safety phrases giving advice on sensible safety precautions eg "wear suitable gloves" or "never add water to this product"
- the name of the chemical and the name of the supplier or manufacturer, to help doctors or first aid staff in the event of an accident.

In addition to labelling, the draft regulations propose that packaging must be designed and constructed so as to prevent accidental spillage in the normal course of handling.

The Commission proposes that the responsibility for attaching the label should lie with suppliers. Manufacturers or importers will be required to attach labels before supplying directly to other manufacturers, or before supplying wholesale or retail outlets. Wholesalers or retailers will still have an obligation to ensure that products are properly labelled before selling them to users; but in practice the Commission expects that they will leave on the manufacturers' label. Wholesalers or retailers who re-package will have to attach their own label. Minimum sizes are specified for the label, but there will still be room for manufacturers to put brand names and other information elsewhere on the container.

Containers of some dangerous chemicals already have to be labelled for international and domestic transport and for storage. For these chemicals a composite label would be allowed, so that a container need carry only one label.

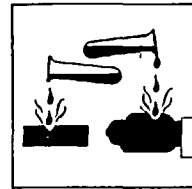
Health and Safety Inspectors (eg Factory Inspectors) will be responsible for enforcing the regulations to ensure that manufacturers, importers, and wholesalers attach the proper label on containers of dangerous chemicals no matter to whom they are being supplied. They will also be on the look-out, when inspecting factories and other workplaces, for containers of chemicals which have not been correctly labelled. Weights and Measures inspectors will be responsible for enforcing the regulations as they apply to sales from shops.

A spokesman for the Health and Safety Commission said of the scheme yesterday that the labels had been devised by the European Economic Communities and that all nine member states had agreed to introduce the scheme. Germany, France, and Belgium already had it partially in operation. At first labels will appear only on containers of single chemicals, and mixtures are not included. The EEC intends, however, gradually to extend the coverage to include products, for example paraquat, which contain only a proportion of one or more of these dangerous chemicals. The degree of danger involved in products which are mixtures depends on how much of a dangerous chemical is present — some chemicals are harmless in quite high concentrations, others are extremely dangerous even in low concentrations.

Working out the safe limits on all the products which contain dangerous chemicals is a mammoth undertaking, and groups of products are being tackled one by one. Work is already at an advanced stage on pesticides, solvents, paints, varnishes, adhesives, and printing inks. Work has also started on a wide range of household products, such as disinfectants and cleaning agents, which can be dangerous in the home. Over the next few years these warning labels should appear on an increasingly wide range of products, both at home and at work, throughout the EEC.



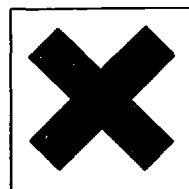
TOXIC



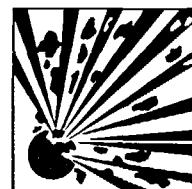
CORROSIVE



OXIDIZING



HARMFUL
IRRITANT



EXPLOSIVE



HIGHLY
FLAMMABLE

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BBC Television, within a broadly comparable range of adult education and training programmes, moves this winter into the second stage of its three-year project *Trade Union Studies*, linked with books, TUC postal courses, and some face-to-face tuition from both the TUC and the WEA. This provision is intended for trade unionists themselves — it is, in fact, a training course. Alongside it, BBC Radio will be taking a broader educational look at the Trade Unions in a series entitled *The Fifth Estate*. Fifty years after the General Strike they are undoubtedly a power in the land.

How has this come about? Is the British experience matched generally in the world at large? And is that power, exercised by a group of men and women representing, and representative of, less than half the adult population, wholly beneficial to the development of an industrial democracy? The public at large may well ask the last of these questions — and perhaps more stridently. But who pauses, before opinionating an answer, to ponder the two preceding questions — questions that an educated democracy cannot afford to ignore? These are patently 'life' matters, and *Lifelines* (Thursdays — 'The Wider World') aims to provide a base from which they can be answered.

Bridge that gap

Among the neglected pages of the Russell Committee's report can still be read the comment that:

None of the other agencies with which we are concerned is ever likely to rival the ability of broadcasting to make education available to people who cannot or will not have recourse to it outside the home.

It is a large claim, and no doubt embraces thought of the range of educational stimuli and educative processes that general broadcasting engenders in those millions who expose themselves to it. Those of us who are specifically concerned with the more systematic provision of programmes to foster education and support training are perhaps especially conscious of the gulf that lies between broadcasting's ability in principle and its achievement in practice.

But because we are broadcasters, rather than teachers and trainers — because we belong to a profession that must develop and preserve a critical sense of what the public will

take, what it will reject, and why; and because we must acquire the skills of translating, through the processes of programme-making, the less palatable into the more acceptable — it may be that we are a little more sensitive in our efforts to detect potential learning thresholds within the community and thus to establish our connecting *Lifelines*. It is, at all events, against that intention — whether we succeed or fail — that we should be understood and judged.

Summary of programmes

What Right Have You Got	— Thursdays, 7.00 - 7.30 pm Radio 3 MW from 7 October; Sundays, 3.30 - 4.00 pm. Radio 4 VHF from 10 October (not Scotland/N. Ireland)
New Developments in Technician Education	— Tuesdays, 7.00 - 7.30 pm. Radio 3 MW 5 - 19 October
Nation at Work	— Tuesdays, 6.30 - 7.00 pm. Radio 3 MW from 5 October
Punti di Vista	— Wednesdays, 6.30 - 7.00 pm. from 6 October; and Sundays, 2.30 - 3.00 pm. Radio 4 VHF from 10 October
Sur le Vif	— Wednesdays, 7.00 - 7.30 pm. Radio 3 MW from 6 October; and Sundays, 3.00 - 3.30 pm. Radio 4 VHF from 10 October
Get By in German/Spanish	— Monday - Friday, 6.30 - 7.30 pm. Radio 3 MW from 21 - 25 March 1977; and from 28 March to April 1977
Trade Union Studies	— Sundays, 9.45 - 10.10 am. BBC1 from 10 October; Tuesdays, 2.30 - 2.55 pm. BBC2 from 12 October
The Fifth Estate	— Thursdays, 6.30 - 7.00 pm. Radio 3 MW & VHF from 28 October

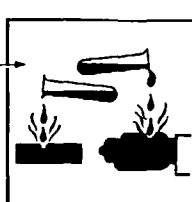
Requests for further information to: Educational Broadcasting Information (30/BC), BBC, London W1A 1AA.

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Danger symbol. (on background of orange/yellow, standing out in contrast to the background. Must be square and, with background, must be at least one tenth of the area of the label). Accompanied by a key word, e.g. corrosive, warns of the type of danger presented by the substance

Risk Phrases: describe dangers presented in more detail.

Safety Phrases: giving advice on sensible safety precautions



Acetic Acid, Glacial

CORROSIVE

Flammable. Causes severe burns.

Do not breath vapour.
Keep out of reach of children .
In case of contact with eyes, rinse immediately
with plenty of water and seek medical advice.

XYZ Chemical Co. Ltd.

— Name of Substance

— Name of Supplier or Manufacturer.
— to help doctors and first aid staff in event of an accident.